STRENGTHENING THE PLURALISTIC EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SYSTEM IN TAJIKISTAN

A MEAS Rapid Scoping Mission
October 3-20, 2011

Final, November 25, 2011
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STRENGTHENING THE PLURALISTIC AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEM IN TAJIKISTAN

Report on the MEAS Rapid Scoping Mission, which was carried out during October 3-19, 2011.

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ACRONYMS

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAT</td>
<td>Agribusiness Association of Tajikistan</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agrodonish</td>
<td>National Association of Agricultural Advisory Services of Tajikistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>AICC</td>
<td>Advisory Information Coordination Center (created by UNICON)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIN</td>
<td>Agricultural Information Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIST</td>
<td>Agricultural Information Service of Tajikistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKF</td>
<td>Aga Khan Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATAC</td>
<td>Agricultural Training and Advisory Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATAS</td>
<td>Agricultural Training and Advisory Service (created by UNICON)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBRD</td>
<td>European Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>FFP</td>
<td>Family Farming Project implemented by DAI</td>
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<td>FtF</td>
<td>Feed the Future</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>German Technical Cooperation</td>
</tr>
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<td>GOT</td>
<td>Government of Tajikistan</td>
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<td>Hukumats</td>
<td>The council that controls government offices at the Rayon or district level</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCO</td>
<td>Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation (the Netherlands)</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRD</td>
<td>International Relief and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamoat</td>
<td>Sub-district government level</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japanese International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>LMD</td>
<td>Local Market Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEAS</td>
<td>Modernization of Extension and Advisory Services (a USAID LWA Project)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<td>MOW</td>
<td>Ministry of Water</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NADF</td>
<td>National Association of Dehkan Farmers (of Tajikistan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helvetas</td>
<td>Swiss Inter-cooperation Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural Resource Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oblast</td>
<td>Province</td>
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<td>OXFAM</td>
<td>OXFAM International [<a href="http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/where_we_work/tajikistan.html">http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/where_we_work/tajikistan.html</a>]</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRO-APT</td>
<td>Productive Agriculture Project implemented by ACDI-VOCA</td>
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<td>PSD</td>
<td>Private Sector Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayon</td>
<td>District level</td>
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<td>RMA</td>
<td>Rapid Market Appraisal</td>
</tr>
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<td>SED</td>
<td>Sustainable Economic Development in Tajikistan</td>
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<td>SENAS</td>
<td>Support to the Establishment of a National Advisory Service</td>
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<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self-Help Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Subject Matter Specialists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAFF</td>
<td>Tajik Agricultural Finance Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAG</td>
<td>Technical Assistance Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICON</td>
<td>International Project Management Company (<a href="http://www.unicon-international.com/">http://www.unicon-international.com/</a>)</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The USAID funded Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) project conducted a scoping mission to examine the pluralistic extension system in Tajikistan and to develop recommendations for strengthening this pluralistic extension system. The assessment work occurred in the field from October 3-19, 2011 and included in-depth interviews with the directors, leaders or representatives of international and public non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector firms/organizations, donor agencies, as well as Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) officials at the national and Rayon (district) levels. The MEAS team also visited farms, Rayon and Jamoat (sub-district) extension offices, as well as national research and agricultural training centers. The mission aimed to identify key issues within the pluralistic extension system in Tajikistan that need to be addressed in order to develop a more sustainable, farmer-led and market driven system of extension and advisory services. In addition, the mission team will recommend specific actions for consideration and possible funding by the USAID Mission.

Summary of Findings

Extension services in Tajikistan are being provided by a range of service providers, including the public sector, private-sector firms, as well as both international and domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The main trend by donor funded projects is a “pay-for-service” approach of providing advisory services. However, within this approach there are different strategies, ranging from being crop or livestock specific (i.e. focusing solely on key crops, such as cotton), expecting farmers to pay part or the full cost of these advisory services, or attempting to recover these costs in-directly through input supply or micro-credit firms. Also, most private sector firms and some NGOs are focused on more progressive farmers that have more land resources and/or are looking for more innovative ways to increase farm household (FH) income (e.g. early horticultural or tree crops for both local and/or export markets). In collecting information on the number of FHs currently being served by the different service providers in Tajikistan, it is estimated that between 5-10% of total FHs are being served and most of these are progressive farmers with domestic and/or export market access. In short, the vast majority of poor FHs, especially those headed by women farmers without market access, are not being served.

In assessing the trained and experienced agricultural officers at the Rayon (district) and Jamoats (sub-district) levels, it seemed clear that they are interested in providing advisory services to farmers in their respective areas. The key questions are what resources are needed and what kinds of training in extension and advisory services could enhance their capacity to serve small-scale men and women farmers, especially in relation to the Feed the Future (FTF) agenda. As outlined in the report, the agricultural offices at both the Rayon and Jamoats have little or no physical resources. For example, they have no government cars (but some have their own cars) or communication resources, such as Internet access, which could provide access to both technical and market information. In addition, all of them were trained in specific technical skills (e.g. agronomy, animal science, agricultural economics or veterinary medicine). Most of these agricultural officers are thinking “top-down” in terms of how they would expect to provide advisory services to farmers. While this issue is surmountable, it must be addressed when working through the public sector.
In addition, none of these officers have been trained in how to organize producer groups (i.e. how to build social capital) and to get these farmers linked to available markets. It should be noted that getting farmers’ rapid access to market information is critically important, so if these small-scale farmers had better access to market information, it would provide them with greater parity in selling these products to traders and processors. Also, the Tajik Agrarian University (and other universities) nor the National Agricultural Training Center do not have any courses in extension methods, especially the needed “process” extension skills. Therefore, a critical issue is how to incorporate these process skills into these front-line extension workers. This is a specific area where the MEAS project could help.

Another major issue was the creation of small (less than 1 hectare), medium (2-4 ha involving several FHs) and larger Dehkan Farms (>30 ha that generally have more than 20 FHs). With the exception of very small Dehkan Farms, where they have “use rights” over their land, most Dehkan Farms are controlled by an appointed director of each farm. Therefore, these individual FHs are frequently assigned to a different portion of this farmland annually; therefore, they do not have “land-use” rights. However, this is a very serious problem that is being addressed under the forthcoming Land Reform legislation and that may give more small-scale farmers more permanent land access.

An important legacy of the former Soviet based agricultural economy is “compartmentalized knowledge,” whereby individuals had specific and discreet tasks. As a result, most farmers within these small and medium-scale Dehkan Farms have very limited knowledge about farm management practices. For example, which crops should they plant and when, which varieties should they use and where to get the seed, what fertilizers they should use, and then how to handle disease and insect problems, such as white flies, when these pest problems start downgrading or destroying their crops. In short, most FHs are neither trained nor experienced in knowing how to intensify and diversify their farming systems, and in getting linked to markets, so they can increase their FH income. Another important issue is that many men from rural areas have migrated to Russia to increase household incomes; therefore, much of the farming is handled by rural women (estimated at 70%) who have very limited knowledge about improved crop and livestock technologies, as well as how they can intensify and diversify their farming systems.

On an upbeat note, since Soviet times, families on these Dehkan Farms each have backyard gardens. These gardens have provided fruits and vegetables for household and local consumption. During post-Soviet times these gardens accounted for 64% of total agriculture production in Tajikistan. However, only 10% of these current commercialized agriculture products originate from these backyard gardens. Therefore, there is ample room for improvement, both in terms of better linking this segment to markets as well as in introducing improved seed varieties and fertilizer use to increase production, as well as how to intensify and diversify these backyard gardens into more high-value and nutritionally important crop and livestock systems. Also, increased integration of these backyard gardens into local and even export markets could substantially help increase agricultural productivity and yields and, thereby, increase farm household income.

Recommendations for Consideration

While most current, donor funded extension initiatives are designed to help develop a sustainable extension mechanism for progressive commercial farmers, there is very little focus on small-scale, non-commercial farmers. The Feed-the-Future in Tajikistan seeks to improve farm household incomes, livelihoods and nutrition for about 44,000 FHs in the Khatlon Oblast; therefore, the pluralistic extension system in that province needs to be scaled up as quickly as possible. This initiative seeks to help
increase the household income and nutrition among lower-income women and their children, which are presently not being addressed by these existing pay-for-service initiatives.

**How to reach 44,000 Farm Households in Khatlon Oblast**

A key factor in reaching 44,000 FHs in Khatlon Oblast is how to get them organized into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and then in determining the most efficient and effective way of getting these new farmer groups linked to markets for specific crop and/or livestock products that they can successfully produce and sell, as well as in improving household nutrition for these women and their children. Clearly, the personnel being hired as agronomists at the Jamoat level have not been trained to organize SHGs. However, there are a variety of successful initiatives that do demonstrate promise, if they can be scaled up. Initiatives, such as the Family Farm Program (FFP), could work to consolidate successes from existing programs into a single unified methodology. FFP could then work with both NGO service providers and public extension workers in selected pilot districts to build public-private partnerships. In addition, the currently successful NGOs would need to scale-up and train additional workers, who could then organize new SHGs in most villages within the selected Jamoats and Rayons (i.e. the proposed pilot project). One key issue that should be addressed is that these NGOs shouldn’t just work with SHGs in key villages that are adjacent to key markets (e.g. as the team saw in Kurgan-Tyube), but they should connect with and serve most of the villages within the targeted Rayons and Jamoats of the Khatlon Oblast.

Specifically, if these NGOs can help organize one or two SHGs within many of these villages, then it would be possible to begin scaling up these SHGs as other FHs begin to realize that they too could start producing and marketing these products to increase their farm incomes. Another key issue, in determining which crop and/or livestock products should be produced, is their access to specific markets (i.e. distance, roads, etc.) and their respective soil and water conditions, especially for their backyard gardens and available presidential land. These key factors will help determine what products SHGs in different villages and Jamoats could successfully produce and market. In addition, if the Jamoat public extension workers could be trained in how to organize producer groups and then in getting these groups linked to markets, then they could take more responsibility for scaling up these SHGs, once these initial groups are successfully established by the NGO working in each of the selected Rayons.

It is recommended that a new public-private partnership (PPP) be built through the current Family Farming Program (FFP) by scaling up and transforming the current public extension system to start becoming more farmer and market-driven. The reason is clear—sustainability after donor projects end. It is recommended that this transformation be done through a pilot project which could be launched in specific Rayons/Jamoats in the Khatlon Oblast. This approach would start building PPPs that would enhance the incomes, livelihoods and nutrition of small-scale FHs, especially women farmers. The details about how this PPP might be implemented are summarized below and included in the recommendations section of this report.

**How Public-Private-Partnerships could be Developed**

It is recommended that selected Rayons (districts) in the Khatlon Oblast be selected for possible participation in a “pilot project” to determine if the Rayon level advisors (e.g. subject matter specialists or SMSs) and the newly hired Jamoat agricultural advisors could start partnering with successful NGOs in getting new SHGs of small-scale farmers established in most of the villages and then in providing them
with needed technical and market information on a continuing basis to help increase the incomes of these small-farm households, especially farm women, and improving the nutrition of their children.

It should be noted that most Jamoats in these districts have or will soon have qualified agronomists who could start becoming the front-line extension workers who could serve the vast majority of small-scale farm households within their assigned 6-7 villages. On a pilot basis, and in conjunction with NGOs, they could serve as facilitators in helping small-scale men and women farmers learn how to intensify and diversify their farming systems, especially on their backyard gardens and available presidential land, both to increase their farm income and improve family nutrition. The advantage of integrating public extension advisors, at both the Rayon and Jamoat levels, into this project is that they could continue working with these small farm households after the FFP ends. In short, this approach could be a way of developing a more sustainable agricultural extension and advisory system within Tajikistan.

Working with public extension in Tajikistan offers both challenges and opportunities. Agricultural officers at both the Rayon and Jamoat levels do seem interested in providing advisory services to farmers. One of the main challenges to be addressed, in working with government extension, is to ensure that they promote an innovative, farmer-led and market-driven extension approach. In addition, work still remains in getting the different government agencies in Tajikistan, with whom these different agriculture extension agents will work (i.e. district and sub-district levels), better coordinated. Also, since these local government institutions currently have very few resources, USAID could include funds to pilot-test a new initiative for public extension workers to assist these small-scale farmers, especially at the Jamoat level. This proposed pilot project should build into the process of creating a more farmer-led extension system, involving the small-scale farmers who make up these groups, to help guide and oversee the extension planning and delivery process. In addition, clear terms of reference for specific government participation would help ensure that this approach promotes farmer decision-making and empowerment regarding these extension and advisory services. The details on building this proposed Public-Private-Partnership is outlined in the recommendations section of this report, including how these public extension workers, especially at the Jamoat level, should be trained for this new role.

**Farmer Access to Up-to-Date Market Information and Location-Specific Technical Information**

Small-farmer access to market information is extremely important, given that both traders and processors want to purchase agricultural products as cheaply as possible to maximize their incomes. Therefore, if small farmers can access current market price information, from both different firms and locations where they might sell their products, then these farmers can start securing better prices for their products. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that a market information center(s) be established, so that farmers in different Oblasts and Rayons within Tajikistan can begin accessing market information on different crop, livestock and other products on a daily basis when they are ready to sell their products.

It is important to develop appropriate interactive tools for accessing and sharing market information. Tajikistan should aspire to create an effective market information system (e.g. Esoko, in many Sub-Saharan African countries, and AMIS in several South and Southeast Asian countries). The key factor, in helping small-scale farmers gain access to current market information, is for this information
to be available through widely used channels. At the present, television and radio fit these criteria. However, there are initial pilots that use SMS via mobile phones. For example, as reported in this report, Sugd AgroServe (SAS) is currently providing limited market information to 98 or its 1,000+ members, but this small usage is due to the fees being charged.

The Agricultural Information Service of Tajikistan (AIST) and SAS in northern Tajikistan are both interested in establishing an expanded market network, but they lack the needed financial resources to first design and then develop the most efficient and reliable way of making this market information easily available to small-scale men and women farmers across Tajikistan. A serious problem is that it is difficult to access accurate, daily market information from the major markets, exporters and processors across Tajikistan. Further support for initiatives being proposed by AIST and/or SAS in the north should be considered in making access to market information, possibly using mobile phone technologies and/or mass media, easily available to small-scale farm households, especially in Khatlon Oblast.

Other information that is urgently needed is to make more location-specific information available about how to improve specific crop and livestock systems. For example, what seed, fertilizer and pesticides should be used for specific crops in different parts of Tajikistan, depending on soil type, access to markets and other factors? As noted in this report, most small-scale farmers, especially those working on small and medium size Dehkan Farms have very limited farm management knowledge and skills about how they can increase their productivity and incomes. Some of this technical information is already available on the AIST (see: http://www.aist.tj/) and the Sugd AgroServe websites (see: http://agroinform.tj/). The problem is that virtually no farmers have internet access to find and read this information; however most input supply stores can access this information, but they primarily serve the more progressive farmers in their service area. Therefore, a more diversified approach is needed to make important technical information available to small scale farm households, including:

- Videos for making important production and management information available to all rural households via television on a national basis as now being done by DAI. For example, how can different groups of farmers diversify their farming systems, which seeds should they buy and use, or how to address important pest management problems, like white flies.
- Create a participatory video initiative such as digital green that allows farmers to document and share best practices and other issues relevant to farmers.
- Capture and make both technical and market information available via radio broadcasts on a daily or weekly basis, probably serving farmers in specific areas, such as in the Khatlon Oblast.
- Develop interactive radio and television shows, where farmers can both call in or send in a text message to participate.
- Expand on technical information (e.g. brochures) that is being currently being developed by the different NGOs and other service providers in making technical and management information available, about the important crop and livestock systems, across different parts of Tajikistan. This information is currently being created and published but little of this material is actually getting to small-scale farm households, especially women farmers.
Front-line Extension Workers Need both Technical and Process Skills and Knowledge

In order to transform current, front-line extension workers, so they become more farmer-led and market driven, they will need a range of both technical and process skills, as identified under the Education and Training section. First, they will need more technical training and information about how small-scale farmers can intensify and diversify their farming systems. Second, they will need to learn how to organize and work with self-help and producer groups and getting them linked to markets. Third, they will need to learn new ICT skills and knowledge, so they can better connect farmers with a range of needed technical, marketing and micro-credit skills and knowledge. It should be noted that the MEAS project is currently developing a range of these different process skills and could help incorporate these skills and knowledge into institutions such as NATC and the Tajik Agrarian University.
ASSESSMENT OF THE PLURALISTIC AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEM IN TAJIKISTAN

Background

As a republic in the Soviet Union, Tajikistan’s economy, including agriculture production, was controlled by directives and quotas from government. The heads of collective farms were tasked with fulfilling these directives and individuals working on these Kolchoz and Sovkhoz farms (collective farms) fulfilled discreet tasks within the production system. Agronomists assigned to a kolkhoz provided extension and advisory services. Cotton was Tajikistan’s main crop and served as raw material for textile mills throughout the Soviet Union. The Soviet economic system subsidized agriculture production through inputs and machinery that helped drive agriculture production.

Independence in 1991 represented in some respects a major break from the past. As subsidies ended, agriculture production went into a tailspin. However, some elements of the Soviet system remained. Government continued to provide directives while the large-scale Kolkhoz’s and Sovkhoz’s were disbanded and broken down into smaller collective units called Dehkan farms. In many instances, the control on large Dehkan farms by chiefs holds sway over the land allotted to different members. While changes have occurred in the agriculture sector, the paradigm from Soviet times has persisted. Despite the Freedom-to-Farm legislation which grants farmers the right to choose what to plant, there is still pressure in certain areas on continuing to plant cotton. On an individual level, many farmers, who previously fulfilled discreet actions on a collective basis, they are now faced with the challenge of acting in a more autonomous manner, fulfilling multiple tasks that were previously carried out by various individuals in these kolkhoz and sovkhoz farms.

Farmers are now faced by a multitude of challenges. Taxes on products produced, especially on export crops as well as on imports, have increased production costs for farmers. Crumbling irrigation infrastructure has meant a decrease in land under irrigation, monoculture cropping of cotton is depleting the soils. Existing irrigation and farming equipment is very outdated, poorly maintained and ill-suited for the shift to smaller scale farming. The current shift to a more market-based agricultural economy represents many challenges. Credit, when available, is often at a high interest rate (minimum of 24%/year). Quality agriculture inputs are often hard to find and extension and advisory services are very limited or non-existent in most communities. In addition, within various value chains, actors are largely disconnected, finding it difficult to create mutually beneficial agreements. At the same time, despite these challenges, a limited number of progressive farmers are successfully increasing the production of high-value vegetable and fruit crops.

At the present, the agriculture sector serves as a safety net for a society which is primarily rural. There are few other viable economic alternatives in Tajikistan and remittances from individual family members who have migrated to Russia, serve as a major source of income for most families. The current context in agriculture could be temporary. As land reform moves forward, there are various scenarios that could play out, including consolidation of agriculture land holdings and the reduction in the number of farms. In addition, as the economy picks up in other sectors, there could be a major shift towards the consumption of more high-value crop and livestock products. However, at the present, agriculture
represents the best option for putting more food on the table through increased production and income generation.

One issue that is shaping the agriculture sector is the process of transformation balanced by the tension to maintain existing practices and paradigms from Soviet times. This includes a push to shift from top-down decision making under the Soviet system to individual decision making based on market driven factors. The donor community is supporting the Government of Tajikistan (GOT) in creating an enabling policy environment. In addition, donors have funded various agriculture programs that support the creation of private based agriculture extension and advisory services that are responsive to market incentives. However, there appears to be a gap in support of small-scale, non-commercial farmers whose income will not be sufficient over the near term to cover these needed advisory services.

Finally, it should be noted that during Soviet times, cotton production held an enormous importance within Tajikistan’s agriculture sector. However, with the end of price and input subsidies (after the fall of the Soviet Union), cotton production plummeted. However, cotton still maintains an important place in both agricultural production and investment. Various donor driven initiatives continue to support cotton production and have succeeded in increasing production and profitability.

Introduction

The agricultural extension system in Tajikistan is very pluralistic but, collectively, impacts less than 10% of the farm households in Tajikistan. According to a survey carried out by the National Association of Agricultural Advisory Services of Tajikistan (Agrodonish) there are 25 private sector firms and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) providing advisory services to selected farm households, primarily in Sugd and Dushanbe RSD oblasts (regions). More than 95% of these organizations, which provide some type of advisory services, are donor funded projects, which generally last 5 years or less.

As a result, most extension and advisory services are donor driven, with almost all effective extension and advisory services being provided through these different donor initiatives. The overall trend for donor funded projects is the pay-for-service approach focused on progressive commercial farmers. The logic within this approach is to promote “financial sustainability” by increasing commercial production, focused on both domestic and export markets. As the focus is on commercial production, farmers will benefit by receiving quality extension and advisory services and, as a result, will be able to pay for these services based on benefits from increased production, income and access to markets. Within this strategy, there are multiple projects funded by different donors that work with small to medium scale commercial farmers. Of the local service providers interviewed (NGOs) most work with multiple donor funded initiatives to provide a range of extension and advisory services through the prism of these funded initiatives. The next section offers a brief summary of these different donors approaches which drive current extension and advisory services for Tajik service providers:

It should be mentioned that at the present time, the public sector is providing little if any advisory services to these Dehkan Farms. However, at the Rayon (district) level, they do have 3-5 qualified agriculturalists with university degrees in agronomy, animal science and agricultural economics, as well

as veterinary medicine. However, these subject matter specialists (SMSs) have minimal resources (e.g. transportation, communications and program support) to provide advisory services beyond the offices where they are located. The key institution at the district level would be to coordinate with the Hukumats (Councils) that makes most of the management decisions for these district level government offices. Therefore, if the decision is taken to develop public-private-partnerships, as part of this proposed Feed-the-Future (FTF) initiative, then it will be important to keep these Hukumats informed.

**Description of Current Extension System Organizations and their Capacity**

**Private Sector Organizations, including Input Supply Dealers, Providing Advisory Services**

- **Tajikistan Agricultural Finance Framework — Christophe Cordonnier, Team Leader**
  (TAFF—see: http://www.taff.tj/)

  The TAFF project, which started in 2007, was expected to “support the restructuring and diversification of the agricultural sector including the cotton subsector. The Framework’s main objective is to provide alternative finance to small and medium-sized farms and support the ‘freedom to farm’ concept whilst fostering best farming practices.” Thus far, the project has made 11,000 loans to 5,600 Dehkan farms. The financial institutions collaborating with TAFF include: Agroinvestbank (AIB), Amonatbank (AB), Bank Eskhata (BE) and Tojiksodirotbonk (TSOB). Also, other microfinance organizations have joined TAFF, including: OXUS, micro lending foundation: HUMO and Partners and microcredit deposit-taking organization: "Arvand" and micro-lending organization: Imon International.

  TAFF works with these local financial institutions to provide credit as well as the use of a tool for analyzing credit worthiness for farmers in helping these institutions assess who should receive loans. They currently provide credit to 15% of the Dehkan Farms producing cotton in Tajikistan. In addition, they are seeking to promote market-driven services, working with both German Technical Cooperation (GIZ) and the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID), who provide subsidies to farmers receiving advisory services. It should be noted that TAFF will not contract with NGOs to provide advisory services, since they are too expensive. Instead, they are working with financial institutions (banks) and microfinance organizations, and expect them to provide advisory services in connection with those Dehkan Farms who take loans from these institutions.

  In 2012, TAFF will continue to work with 80% of these lending institutions as they screen good Dehkan farms from poor Dehkan farmers in terms of their farming systems and management practices. These financial institutions are expected to give good advisory services to those Dehkan farms that are taking loans, with a focus on value chain development as well as giving good advisory services to these farmers. For example, these farmers are expected to cover the cost of these good advisory services for cotton, wheat, oilseeds and apricots. However, it appears that there is little or no future for wheat production in Tajikistan. In addition, they are focusing on apples, apricots, herbs and medicinal crops, (e.g. dill) to increase farm household income, including 64% of household land focused on backyard gardening. Specifically, the TAFF project expects the selected financial
Instituitions to provide these advisory services directly to farmers, using the Technical Assistant Group (TAG) approach (see the summary of the SME project below).

Also, they are planning to provide assistance in expanding artificial insemination (AI) for cattle breeding (i.e. the goal is to provide 1.5 million AIs by the end of the project to improve the breeds of cattle), as well as using flax seed and cotton cake to feed these improved breeds of cattle. Finally, they have established a major demonstration farm for 1) generating AI semen to continue improving breeds of cows, 2) producing alfalfa seed for distribution to farmers, and 3) using fodder beets, maize, sunflower and rape seed to improve cattle feed. Also, a new EU firm that is now working in Tajikistan is investing €10 million to set up a feed mill to produce animal feed and another French firm is setting up small-scale processing centers in specific areas of Tajikistan. TAFF recommends that 15% of land should be used for intensive pasture production, including growing wheat and/or corn for silage (i.e. animal feed).

- **Family Farming Project (FFP) being implemented by DAI—William Levine, Chief of Party**

The FFP project has three major components, including 1) expanding the number of Water User Associations (WUAs), so that farmers will get organized to manage and maintain their irrigation systems; 2) serving food insecure farmers, especially women farmers, to increase their farm household incomes; and 3) improving household nutrition by training rural women how to better feed and care for their children. It should be noted that this FFP project is now moving into year two of this 4-year project, but when Tajikistan was designated as a Feed the Future (FtF) country by USAID, then the scope and focus of this project changed from a national project to a more focused project on maximizing the impact on small-scale and poor farm households. Currently, the focus is on about 44,000 small farm households, affecting about 300,000 people, especially women and children, in rural areas of southern and eastern Tajikistan.

Organizing WUAs takes considerable time, first in getting these associations organized and farmers willing to spend their own time in maintaining and up-grading their irrigation systems. They have a very competent water user association organizer who is skilled in organizing these WUA groups. Therefore, it takes considerable interaction with these farmers to convince them why and how to manage their water/irrigation systems. Typically the whole formation process takes 2-3 years. Also, the project provides materials for upgrading the system, for example, rehabilitating the water control points. The farmers themselves must install these facilities, thus improving their understanding of the system. In short, farmers must do all of this work themselves to maintain and strengthen their irrigation systems.

Component two will provide advisory services to small-scale farm households, especially women farmers, who carry out an average of 70% of the agricultural work on family farms. Currently, the FFP has 51 demonstration sites where they are showing improved management practices for different crops, especially for those farmers engaged in producer groups (i.e. about 10-15 farmers/group). The primary focus will be on kitchen gardens and allocated presidential land (if available) where farm women do most of the work and where they will learn how to intensify and diversify their backyard gardens. The goal will be for these kitchen gardens to produce more improved horticultural and poultry products, both for home consumption and for sale at local or
urban markets. In short, as described below, a primary purpose of this component will be to help improve human nutrition within each household, as well as to help these women farmers start generating additional farm income from these backyard gardens and assigned presidential land (if available). Currently, there are 13 core groups of women farmers being trained about which crops (and poultry) they should grow to improve family nutrition, especially for their children.

The third component will be on teaching rural women how to improve the nutrition of their children, especially after the children reach 6 months of age. In short, which specific crops (e.g. high protein legumes, such as peanuts, as well as onions and other crops) and livestock products (e.g. eggs) can and should be produced and fed to their children. Once these farm households have been trained how to scale up their backyard gardens (and presidential land), then these women will also be trained in what specific crop and livestock products should be fed to their children. Also, these women will be trained in environmental hygiene. For example, one specific problem to be addressed in some households is that young women spend most of their time in the field working, while grandma takes care of their children. Unfortunately, grandma feeds this children like she did with her own children (i.e. poor nutrition); therefore, many children receive only 1,800—2,200 calories/day and are malnourished. All of these issues will be addressed through component 3 of FFP.

- **Productive Agricultural Project—(PRO-APT) implemented by ACDI-VOCA**

The PRO-APT project started in January 2010 and focuses on 8 districts in the Sugd Oblast (5 staff members), 6-7 districts around Dushanbe (16 staff members) and several districts in the Khatlon Oblast (1 staff member). Their target group is farmers with more than 10 ha of land and they are working with local NGOs as well as local input supply dealers. In the north (Sugd Oblast), they started by conducting 9 demonstration plots, but this activity has now been taken over by the 10 agro-input supply dealers in the different districts. They indicated that ACDI-VOCA in year one provided farmers with discounted vouchers that they could use to purchase inputs, with a 25% discount. Now, these farmers are buying these inputs with cash, given last year’s profits. They indicated that some of these input supply dealers are large and some small but, on average, these dealers are collectively supplying inputs to about 1,000 farmers. The primary crops being supported are tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, apricots, watermelons, lemons and beef cattle. They indicated that they only work with farmers who are “market oriented” and these farmers should have the capacity to get loans, so they can purchase inputs.

The primary areas of this project are to: 1) focus on new varieties for these primary crops; and 2) getting these newly establish farmer groups linked to processors (e.g. tomatoes and cucumbers), and/or exporters (e.g. apricots and onions). In the north, they are working with 3 processors, with 30 canning factories, especially for tomato processing. In addition, they are focusing on apricots for export to Russia, as well as some onions for domestic markets. One important problem in the north is that there is a very poor relationship between farmers and processors, since processors want to buy as cheaply as possible. Therefore, farmers are not encouraged to produce specific crops (e.g. tomatoes and cucumbers) for sale to these processing firms. Therefore, they are encouraging processors to work and contract directly with those producer groups who are willing to produce specific crop varieties that the processors want and need. In the south, the primary crops are onions...
for export to Russia, as well as watermelons and lemons. The PRO-APT project hopes to encourage farmers in the south to expand their production of these high-value crops, especially onions.

PRO-APT indicated that the primary problems identified, include: 1) Farmers don’t know what to produce and how to produce it (lack of knowledge); 2) Road and infrastructure is very weak, so it’s hard to get specific products to either processors and/or exporters; 3) Processors and exporters want these high-value products at minimum costs, which results in 4) farmers not having enough money to purchase the needed high quality inputs. In addition, 5) irrigation is a major problem and 6) a key policy issue is that the VAT tax for export crops, such as apricots and onions, is 18% (10% for cotton), which directly affects farm income and makes it more difficult for farmers to produce and market these high-value crops.

Overall, PRO-APT seeks to fill in various voids within the agriculture sector. At the present there is a lack of high quality, certified agriculture inputs in Tajikistan, as well as a lack of advisory services. PRO-APT seeks to create and strengthen the capacity of existing agro-input dealers by working with them to increase the availability of high quality seeds, fertilizer and pesticides and advice on how to adequately use these products to increase productivity. This project works with specific value chains in the different parts of the country as identified above. In the north, they work with apricots, onions and tomatoes. In the area around Dushanbe and further south, they work with lemons and watermelons, as well as beef in the different parts of the country where they are working.

- **Rural Growth Project—AFC Consultants International—Hartwig Ungethuem, Team Leader**

This GIZ funded project is providing advisory services for cotton farmers in Dehkan Farms. They have established 13 Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) in several districts, which includes one senior agronomist for each TAG and then they have 65 field advisors (i.e. these are progressive farmers who are hired on a contract basis and there about 5 field advisors per TAG) that regularly visit these Dehkan Farms. Each TAG covers 1500 hectares (ha) of land with each field advisor covering 300 ha. During the first year GIZ paid for 52% of the costs and farmers covered 48%. During the second year of this project, farmers will be expected to pay 75% of the costs. These field advisors (consultants) provide advisory services on a weekly basis, especially as problems occur (e.g. a disease or insect problems). These problems are generally first identified by these field advisors and then they provide immediate advisory services to each of these Dehkan Farms and spread word about these problems to the other TAGs. During these meetings they can respond to and provide site specific advice, as well as helping link farmers with high quality inputs. In 2012, AFC plans to scale up this project to set up 3-5 additional TAGs that will provide advisory services for apricots that are being grown and marketed for export. For more information on AFC, see: [http://www.afci.de/](http://www.afci.de/)

- **Local Market Development (LMD)**

The Swiss NGO Helvetas funds the Local Market Development (LMD) program. LMD seeks to enhance the benefits and collaboration of farmers and other actors along value chains. LMD works to connect farmers, agro-input dealers and processors. The idea is how to enhance productivity, efficiency and benefits for everyone along different value chains. LMD works with local service providers to provide high quality extension and advisory services as well as to bring farmers, agro-
input dealers and processors together. The idea is to increase benefits for everyone along the value chain. In terms of sustainability, over the long run financing is expected to be covered by farmers by providing fees or premiums to these advisory service providers for fulfilling their contract agreements. For example, a farmer will pay a service provider for increased production. An agro-input dealer will provide a premium for sales of inputs facilitated through a service provider and a processor will provide a fee for helping farmers reach an established volume that is stipulated in their contract. These advisory services are being provided through the Farmer Field School (FFS) methodology, as well as providing informational booklets regarding specific crops being addressed. LMD calculates that it will take two to three years to reach financial sustainability and, during this time, producers will increase their productivity and profits and be able to fund advisory services once the LMD initiative ends.

- **Sugd AgroServe Consulting—Makhinakhon Suleymanova, Director**

Sugd AgroServe is the leading input supply firm in Sugd Oblast that is providing improved or imported seeds, effective pesticides (also imported) as well as fertilizer for the very progressive farmers around Khujand that are producing and marketing tomatoes, apricots and other products. After being started about 10 years ago, they have about 1,000 farmer members, as well as serving other progressive farmers. In addition, they have a very extensive Internet website (see: http://agroinform.tj/) where they provide both technical and market information to input supply dealers and farmers that have Internet access. Also, they focus on “experimental” high value crop varieties, many of them imported.

One of their most successful farmers visited during this visit is generating farm income between $10,000-12,000/ha. For example, he grows 3 crops/year, starting with early season tomatoes and cucumbers and then they grow cabbages, beets, and other high value crops. This past year, since he purchased and used specific imported varieties and pesticides from AgroServe, their production was very high, while other nearby farmers growing other varieties, had more serious disease problems due to the white fly, resulting in low yields and income. As a result of not knowing how to control the white fly, most of these nearby farmers were not able to pay their land rental and input supply costs, creating very serious economic problems for their family. This particular farmer also had white fly problems, but was able to keep these white flies under control; therefore, his yields were largely maintained. As a result, this farmer made so much money that he bought a new car for his family.

**Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

- **Agricultural Training and Advisory Center (ATAC) based in Kulyab in Khatlon Oblast—European Union (EU) funded and SENAS supported—Bozorali Safaro**

This NGO implemented project was expected to work with 3,000 farmers in 2010 and to expand to 14,000 farmers in 2011. The project’s focus is on early horticulture crops and, during the first year, they worked on tomatoes and cucumbers (107 farmers) and potatoes (67 farmers). In addition they
are working on honey (45 farmers), apples and pears (45 farmers), and poultry (5 farmers, mostly women). Thus far, they have created 8 farmer groups for tomatoes and cucumbers (30-40% women); 5 groups for potatoes (30-40% women) and 3 groups for honey (mostly men). The extension method they are using is Farmer Field School (FFS) and the strategy is to Train the Trainers (ToT), which involves training progressive farmers in each district. They had planned to work in 8 districts in the Khatlon Oblast, but thus far they are only working in 3 districts. In addition, they indicated that they want to work on grapes and to expand their efforts on honey production. This project has a total of 14 staff members, including 7 agronomists with university degrees, 1 livestock specialist and 6 administrative support staff (including 2 drivers and guesthouse support staff). Two of these agronomists are assigned to each of the 3 districts. ATAC owns 2 cars and, as needed, rents 3 cars. Also, all of these professional agronomists have computers and mobile phones. It should be noted that the ATAC project also obtains resources from other donors, including: Helvetas (LMD; see below), ICCO, an inter-church organization, see: http://www.icco.nl/en/about-icco, MSDSP, see: http://www.akdn.org/rural_development/tajikistan.asp, which is the Aga Khan Foundation and TAFF, whose activities are outlined above.

- Local Market Development (LMD) NGO—funded by Helvetas, Sugd Oblast—Shahlo Atabaeva

This project began in 2008 in the Sugd Oblast and will end December 2012; this project builds directly on the experience of a similar and very successful project in Kyrgyzstan, which started 8 years ago. Under this LMD project, they plan to successfully serve about 1,000 farmers with 0.3 ha of land/farmer by the end of 2011. Thus far, they are working with 667 farmers on tomatoes and cucumbers (for processors), raspberries, cabbage (for local markets) and onions for export (70 tons were sent to Russia in 2011). In addition, they plan to introduce poultry in 2012. In terms of tomatoes and cucumbers, the maximum distance between producers and processors is 25km. Also, they indicated that it takes 8kg of fresh tomato to produce 1kg of tomato sauce. The NGO that is implementing this project indicated that they hope to get processors and the farmer groups more closely linked together by the end of 2011. Note: According to the DAI survey that was carried out by Petra Geraedts, this project has no relationship with the MOA, universities and research institutes in Tajikistan.

It should be noted that in year one, the implementation strategy was to give intensive training to the selected target farmers about how to produce these different crops. Then, in year two, the primary focus will be to provide consultative services (i.e. individual farm visits) to discuss specific problems, as needed by these different farmers and/or farmer groups. Then in year 3, advisory services will be provided only on a “demand” basis, whereby if individual farmers need specific help and/or advice, then they can call their service provider and ask for their assistance. They indicated that there are about 15 farmers per group, including 1 farm leader. These farm leaders meet once/month with one of their five (5) agronomists to discuss particular issues or problems. At one point, they had a serious disease problem, so they brought in an IPM specialist from Kyrgyzstan to train these 5 agronomists in specific IPM skills and knowledge. For more information on Helvetas projects in Tajikistan, see: http://www.helvetas.tj/en/
• **EHIO is implemented by Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA)—Marina Safarova, Exec. Director**

This is a project that was started in 2007 by GIZ in 2 districts in the Sugd Oblast and is now receiving World Bank financing to continue working with collective farmer groups. The focus is on tree crops, including apricots, pears, plums, almonds, grapes and pomegranate, which involves about 1,000 farmers. In addition, they are working with 75 women farmers who are now producing vegetable crops (tomatoes and cucumbers). Also, after three years, they have introduced drip irrigation into about 30 ha, which involves about 35% women farmers and 65% male farmers. The most important issue mentioned is that farmers do not want to pay for these advisory services. For more information on EHIO, see: [http://www.ica-international.org/tajikistan/programs.htm](http://www.ica-international.org/tajikistan/programs.htm)

• **Agency for Support Development Process (ASDP) Nau—Ja'mshed Kayumov, Executive Director**

This ASDP project is working in 5 districts in Sugd Oblast, including 50 large and small projects. They reported having about 50 farmer groups involving 1,475 farmers who are growing fruit (apricots), vegetables (tomatoes and cucumbers) and livestock (cows, sheep and goats). The director indicated that these producer groups sell their products together and work on contracts. While the team only talked to the director about this one ASDP project in Sugd Oblast, they have other projects being implemented elsewhere in Tajikistan. For more information on ASDP Nau, see: [http://www.agencynau.tj/novosti/novosti%20e.html](http://www.agencynau.tj/novosti/novosti%20e.html)

• **Advisory Information Network (AIN)—N.R. Mirzoev, Country Director**

The AIN was established in 2007 and currently has 14 members and 83 extension workers that are expected to provide agricultural information to farmers. The AIN is financed by the EU and other donors and they have extension service providers in 2 Oblasts, including both the Rayon (district) and Jamoat (sub-district) levels. They initially created Agricultural Information Centers (AICs), which have been converted into commercial centers. These centers develop and disseminate advisory packages for different crop, livestock and other systems. For example, they have organized 35 farm households (FHs) that are learning about beekeeping and they are charging these farmers for these services. Also, they are looking for the latest technologies and are currently serving 6 Rayons (districts) and 30 Jamoats (sub-districts). The director indicated that there are 2 advisors in each Jamoat, including one crop and one livestock specialist. In most cases that are providing advisory services for the “niche” cash crops grown in each district, such as legumes, green peas, turkey, ostriches and other niche innovations. In general, they are conducting training through a “farmer-to-farmer” training approach. They view themselves as an innovative extension system that focuses on specialty crop and livestock systems. Also, they see themselves as helping farmers to increase their exports to Russia, including dried onions, garlic, etc.

• **Mehrangez NGO—Umarova Sharofat, Director**

This district level NGO started in 1997 under a donor funded project and set up 15 self-help groups (SHGs) between 1997 and 2005. Since then, they have been able to scale up this model to include 36
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SHGs involving 27 women’s SHG (198 women) and 9 men’s SHGs (28 men) for a total of 276 farmers that are organized into 3 village-level federations, with each federation working together. In addition, on other projects, this NGO is working with 511 farmers in two districts that are growing lemons in their backyard, which requires greenhouse coverage during the winter. Also, under the Swiss financed LMD project, they are working with 90 farmers that are growing onions in Sanga District, with 50% being women’s farmers.

One key question that was raised during this discussion is how they organized women’s groups early in this project. Ms. Sharofat indicated that this process started in 2003 and was difficult at first, due to the distrust and mentality of these women farmers. However, once these women saw that this NGO was working to help them, they soon become active women’s groups. She also indicated that during their first meeting with the farmers in one village, about half of the people attending this meeting got up and left the meeting. The people who stayed were largely the poorer women farmers and one women’s group was formed in early 2004. Then, later in 2004, an additional two women’s SHGs were formed. By 2005, 2 more women’s groups were formed and then 3 men’s groups were organized. Now, in this village alone, there are over 100 farm households organized into 9 SHGs.

Ms. Sharofat indicated there are, on average, about 10 members of each woman’s group that have being formed in each village. For example, in the village that the team visited, there were 6 women’s SHGs and 3 men’s SHGs or a total of 9 SHGs in that village; also, the “federation” of these village groups meets at least once/month. Also, once established and earning money, each member contributes 3 Somoni/month to their SHG. The women’s group that the team visited currently has 6063 Somonis and the group leader has taken a 2,500 Somoni loan from this account as she scales up her additional land (as group leader, she had received an additional 0.1 ha of presidential land). Also, it should be noted that one important criterion for their participation in these groups is that they must have land. For example, to produce early season tomatoes and cucumbers under greenhouse, they must have at least 0.1 ha of land available; in the case of onions at least 0.3 ha, and for lemons they must already have 20 or more lemon trees. Also, each group has a specific location within their village where they bring their vegetables or fruit to sell to traders, who bring their trucks to that village. It should be noted that since this village is very close to Kurgan-Tube (2-3 km), the capital of Khatlon Oblast (province), the road access of this village was a significant advantage to these farmers for both local and export markets.

Given that farmers did not have much access to plastic to establish their seasonal greenhouses, as well as funds to purchase seed, fertilizer and pesticides, this NGO established a micro-loan office that could give micro-credit to any of these farmers, especially in helping them set up their greenhouses to produce and market early season tomatoes and cucumbers. She indicated that once these farmers started earning considerable profits from the production and sale of these early vegetable crops, they no longer needed micro-credit. For example, farmers growing onions could produce 50-60 tons of onions/ha, which means that most would earn an equivalent of $2,400 on 0.3 ha of onion production. In the case of greenhouse production of tomatoes and cucumber, Ms. Sharofat indicated that women farmers could produce about 5 tons of cucumber/0.1 ha of land and this would generate about 15,000 Somoni or over $3,000/0.1 ha. In the case of early season
tomatoes, she indicated that they could generate upwards of 9 tons of tomatoes/0.1 ha which sold for an average of 5 Somoni or upwards of 45,000 Somoni or $9,000/0.1 ha. Obviously, the early production of early tomatoes and cucumbers is a very important and valuable production strategy for small-scale farmers, but they must have market access. Also, it should be noted that these farmers are also producing other high-value crops during the second growing season, including potatoes, cabbage, turnips, carrot and maize (for their dairy cows).

- **Ghamkhori NGO—Bahodur Toshmatov, Chairman**

  This NGO is engaged in many different donor funded projects, ranging from agriculture, health, nutrition, education and legal activities. This NGO was also started in 1997 and they currently have 48 staff members, working on 15 projects in 8 target districts in the Khatlon Oblast. For example, they are working on gender issues, HIV/AIDs, violence against women, as well as agriculture. During this meeting, the primary focus was on agriculture. They indicated that they have 6 agricultural specialists and 3 of these specialists attended this meeting. They were following a somewhat similar strategy as the Mehrangez NGO, including lemons (16 SHGs with 240 members), early season tomato and cucumber production (27 farmers), potatoes (53 farmers), watermelons (11 farmers). He indicated that, on average, these lemon farmers obtain about 60 lemons per tree and then these lemons are exported to Russia in April.

  Also, Mr. Toshmatov indicated their agronomists have established demonstration plots in each SHG for vegetable crops, where they provide seed, fertilizer and pesticides and keep good data on the management practices being used in each demonstration plot. One important difference, with the Mehrangez NGO, is that they require 0.35 ha/farm household; therefore, only 20% of their participating farmers are women. Also, they indicated that they recover some of the cost of these advisory services by getting a commission from the input supply store (based on a 3 year contract) where these participating farmers are expected to purchase their inputs. It was unclear as to whether these farmers are aware of this contract or not. For additional information on the agricultural projects being implemented by the Ghamkhori NGO, go to Annex D.

**Public Sector Organizations**

The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has agricultural administrative personnel at the national, Oblast (provincial) and Rayon (district) levels (i.e. a minimum of one agronomist, one livestock specialist and one agricultural economist) and now the local government has received government approval to add one agronomist at the Jamoat (sub-district) level. Thus far, one agronomist has been hired at 80 of the 427 Jamoats in Tajikistan and additional hires are expected during 2012. However, these agricultural specialists have very few resources to work with in carrying out their assigned duties, which is largely to supervise and assist the Dehkan Farms in their respective Jamoat. One option being considered is to use these Jamoat level agronomists to provide free advisory services to farmers within their area, but this will be very difficult to implement without having adequate transportation, communications and other needed resources to conduct demonstrations and carry out other advisory services. However, it was stated that these “deputy agriculturalists” will be trained by the civil service department in collaboration with the Ministries of Agriculture, Water and other Ministries. As outlined below, the team did visit with these agricultural advisors at the Rayon and Jamoat levels, and were interested to learn more about the
number and qualifications of these officers. Next, we will summarize the primary public agricultural extension organizations that play some role at the national level in organizing, coordinating and/or providing some type of extension and advisory services.

- **Agrodonish—Umed Kasimov, Director**

  Agrodonish is the *Association of Extension Organizations in Tajikistan* that was established in October 2009 with European Union (EU) funding and it currently includes 6 member institutions in Tajikistan. The members are: the Agricultural Information Network (AIN), Zarzamin, EHIO—Farhang va Tarakkiyot, the Agricultural Training and Advisory Center (ATAC), the National Agricultural Training Center (NATC), and the National Association of Dehkan Farms (NADF). Each of these member institutions are expected to contribute $200 each year to maintain Agrodonish. Although there are more than 30 extension/advisory service organizations in Tajikistan, as outlined in this report, however, most of these organizations are private sector or NGO service providers that are not members of Agrodonish. The role of Agrodonish is to coordinate and ensure that all of its member organizations provide good advisory services to Tajik farmers. However, they hope to increase the number to 9 association members by early 2012. The criterion for becoming members of Agrodonish is that these organizations must be both competent and transparent in providing advisory services to farmers. For more information on all service providers in Tajikistan, see the Agrodonish report on *Agricultural Extension in Tajikistan*, 2010, which summarizes the work of 46 public organizations that provide different services.

- **Agricultural Information Service of Tajikistan (AIST)—Muhiddin Sharipov, Managing Director**

  The AIST has a very elaborate website in Russian (see: [http://www.aist.tj/](http://www.aist.tj/)) with considerable technical, market and other information available about all types of crop and livestock systems. Given that few, if any farmers have Internet access, the AIST is very interested in making market and other information more easily available to farmers using mobile phones. Director Sharipov has been working on a proposal that will lay out how they might develop such a mobile advisory service network for farmers across Tajikistan. It should be noted, however, that other countries in South Asia (e.g. India), as well as many Sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries that are rapidly moving forward to establish different types of mobile marketing (eSoko) and advisory (e.g. AMIS in Rwanda) services. Therefore, it will be important for the AIST to get further support to develop an appropriate marketing and information system in developing a more comprehensive AIST network. For example, the National AGROinform Federation in Moldova developed and successfully established an agricultural marketing website (see: [http://www.agravista.md/](http://www.agravista.md/)) in 2004 where farmers can find markets for their products (e.g. processors), as well as selling their products on line to both domestic and international markets.

- **National Association of Dehkan Farms (NADF)—Azizbek Sharipov, Director**

  The National Association of Dehkan Farms was establish by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which includes 109 Dehkan Farms, with 6,911 farm members. They have two training centers for training Dehkan Farm leaders (20 km south of Dushanbe and 200 km north-east
of Dushanbe), as well as having council meetings once a month to discuss problems related to these Dehkan Farms. About 80% of their training courses are for the farmers themselves, while the other 20% are “train-the-trainer” courses for these Dehkan farm leaders. In most cases they hire university faculty from the Agrarian University or researchers from the national research center to teach these courses. About 25 participants attend each course and these sessions generally last 3-5 days. Some of the areas covered include developing farm business plans, improving horticulture crop production, livestock management practices, including beef, sheep and goats, as well as developing strategic plans for the Jamoats. Also, they work aggressively in trying to change legislation that will improve the status and independence of these Dehkan Farms. The director indicated that the government wants these farms to improve, but government is unwilling to invest anything to strengthen/improve advisory services for these farmers. For more information on the number of staff, activities and partnership with other institutions, see: http://www.worldwide-extension.org/asia/tajikistan/national-association-of-dehkan-farms

• National Agricultural Training Center (NATC)—Dr. R.R. Qudratov, Director

The NATC was established in 2002 under the World Bank’s Farm Privatization Support Project. The director indicated that the first course they offered in 2003 was a three month, Train-the-Trainer Agricultural Extension Course. Since then, they have offered a large range of courses from land reform training for 18,000 farmers (6,000/year) to a more recent GIS-GPS training course for ICT technicians who need these skills. The team received a copy of all of the training courses completed between 2003 and 2010; therefore, these details will not be included here. Dr. Qudratov said that most of these training courses are conducted in the field, since they have a limited number of classrooms and residential facilities to bring people to the NATC. For example, during the past year they trained agriculturalists from 14 NGOs about the production and delivery of high quality seed to producer groups. These NGOs were reported to have created 1,095 producer groups in southern Tajikistan focusing on many different types of crop and livestock systems. In the process, the NATC produces training materials and modules for use by these agricultural specialists for the farmers being served. Dr. Qudratov reported that they have 12 full time staff at the NATC, but they primarily hire agricultural specialists as consultants in the specific areas being addressed by each training course. These specialists/consultants then develop the training materials and technical brochures that are then used by the trainees after completing the course. It should be noted that NATC is also a member of Agrodonish, so they are well connected with the other members of the Association of Extension Organizations in Tajikistan.

• Center of Information and Press for the Ministry of Agriculture—N.G. Dadabaev, Head

In 2009, the Ministry of Agriculture created a national system of advisory services. There are 10 members in the Working Group, including representatives from research, the Agrarian University and other service providers. They worked closely with the SENAS project and they had the opportunity to visit nearby countries to assess their extension and advisory systems. Also, they prepared the Agrarian Reform document that was sent to the President in April 2011. This document was also sent to the donor community and then these donors agreed on key priorities: 1)
to create the Association of Agricultural Advisory Services (i.e. Agrodonish), including the public and private sector as well as the NGOs; 2) the MOA seeks to coordinate all advisory service providers by creating a coordination center for the different service providers to meet, discuss and refine their extension strategies; and 3) to hire 1-2 agronomists in each Rayon (district) to function as extension advisors\(^2\). The overall goal is to maintain national food security.

**Public Agricultural Offices at the Rayon (district) and Jamoat (sub-district) Levels**

The MEAS team visited the Jomi Rayon (district) agricultural office in the Khatlon Oblast on October 18\(^{th}\) to learn more about the number and type of agricultural workers at the district level and their respective duties and responsibilities. All of the technical staff had university degrees in some area of agriculture, in line with their duties in the district office. For example, the director had an animal science degree from the Tajik Agrarian University and the Deputy Director had his university degree in veterinary science from a Russian university. The Deputy Director was also very knowledgeable about aquaculture, since there are about 1,000 ha of fish ponds in their district, including 5 species of fish. In addition, they have a senior agronomist, another animal science specialist, and an agricultural economist. Also, there is a chief accountant who collects and compiles data from the 7 Jamoats within this district (this data is collected by the accountants who reside in each Jamoat). Also, they are focusing on other agricultural issues, such as the diversification of farming systems. They reported that about 16,710 ha in their district are irrigated, with about 9,000 ha of this irrigated land being used to produce cotton, 4,700 ha used for wheat and the other 2,000 ha being used for backyard gardens where vegetables and other high-value crops are grown. The 43,000 ha of rainfed land is used as pasture land for livestock, as well as tree crops, such as almonds, and flax, chickpea and other semi-arid crops. Also, some of this land is allocated for forestry production.

The district agriculture director reported that the major role of these district-level agricultural specialists is to provide advisory services for the Dehkan Farms as a means of increasing their farm income. He indicated that before these Dehkan Farms were established, they had 17 senior agronomists working directly with each of these respective assigned Collective Farms. Now, 1,700 Dehkan Farms have been created where most of the new “leaders” of these smaller Dehkan Farms know very little about agricultural production and management practices. Also, he pointed out that there are three types of Dehkan Farms: 1) individual or family Dehkan Farms (mainly vegetables and other crops; 2) small Dehkan Farms (4-5 Ha) that grow cotton as their main crop, as well as vegetables in their backyard gardens; and 3) large or collective Dehkan Farms (>30 ha) that primarily produce cotton. It was unclear as to the type of advisory services being provided farms in the rainfed land area.

The director indicated that during the past year, they conducted 12 large workshops and some additional small workshops for these Dehkan Farm leaders. For example, they had workshops on handling farm machinery, land preparation, artificial insemination, planting different vegetable

\(^2\) It was unclear as to whether these would be new hires or whether he was unaware that there were agricultural specialists (agronomists, animal specialists and agricultural economists, etc.) who are already assigned to the MOA offices in each Rayon (district).
crops, particularly onions, and wheat production. He said that for these workshops, they include the two agronomists from each Jamoat, plus about 20-25 farm leaders/Jamoat. Also, they have regular council meetings where they discuss key agricultural issues. Also, the national mass media is being used to tell farmers which crops/varieties are recommended.

The director outlined the following constraints for strengthening advisory services: 1) inadequate vehicles (the ones they have are more than 30 years old and so they have to use their own cars); 2) lack access to a computer with Internet access as well as other resources, such as a fax machine, printing equipment, etc.; and 3) they have no financial support in this office, other than the low salaries that each staff member receives. In short, the reason why these well trained agricultural workers do not spend much time in the field is due to lack of transportation, financing, Internet access and other key constraints.

The team was able to visit one Jamoat and met with the newly hired agronomist at this center. This individual was a cotton expert with a university degree in cotton management. This agronomist took this new position in May 2011 and his current responsibility is to monitor the Dehkan Farms, especially for irrigation, fertilization and other management issues. He indicated that he primarily gives advisory services to the newly established, small Dehkan Farms, where the leaders have very limited knowledge about key management practices. He indicated that the older, large Dehkan Farms do not need his advisory services, since they already know how to manage their farms. Also, he indicated that he does spend a small part of his time addressing backyard gardening practices in his Jamoat villages. However, he indicated that he must use his own care for all field activities; therefore, he doesn’t get to the field as often as he would like.

Other Extension and Advisory Service Projects and Institutions Not Visited

- **Project Organic Value Chain Development Project (OVCD)** funded by ICCO and Helvetas; first phase from 2010-2012
- **CESVI** which includes three projects funded by an Italian NGO (CESVI) and the European Union (EU) in three specific districts (e.g., Abdurakhomi Jami and Jovid) from 2010-2013. These projects are carried out in collaboration with the Advisory Information Network (AIN), Agricultural Training and Advisory Centre (ATAC), Association of Professional Agro Consultants “Zarzamin”, the National Association of Small & Medium Business of the Republic of Tajikistan (NASMB) and designed to improve the livelihoods of rural communities through innovative agricultural production, marketing and processing. For more information, see: [http://www.cesvi.eu/?pagina=pagina_generica.php&id=645](http://www.cesvi.eu/?pagina=pagina_generica.php&id=645)
- **Private Sector Development component of the Sustainable Economic Development Project** being funded by DFID, GIZ and the UNDP from January 2010 through December 2012. This project is focused on value chain development for tomatoes and apricots and will cover all 14 districts in the Sugd Oblast.
- **Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Project** funded by GIZ in cooperation with DED focusing on forestry rehabilitation by using energy efficient products for water harvesting and water pumps (without electricity)
• **Khatlon Livelihood Support Project** funded by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) which started in 2009 and will continue until 2014 and is focused on 170 villages in 28 Jamoats in Khatlon Oblast.

• **Project for Improvement of Agricultural Extension Service (PIAS)** funded by JICA and seeks to reinforce agrarian organization in Tajikistan. The goals are to 1) improve agricultural extension services in Tajikistan by reinforcing NADF and ADF (local association of Dehkan Farmers); 2) Create a prototype of Agrarian Organizations (i.e. an association of Dehkan farmers) to provide comprehensive agricultural services for these Dehkan farmers; and 3) strengthen the capacity of NADF and selected ADFs.

• **Community Agricultural Watershed Management Project (CAWMP)** which is funded by the World Bank from 2009-2011 and implemented by the MOA in collaboration with the Tajik Agrarian University and the Tajik Academy of Agricultural Science.
Other Overlapping Issues Concerning Current Extension Services in Tajikistan

Funding for Extension Programs and Activities

At the present time, nearly all funding for extension activities comes from the donor community (USAID, GIZ and the World Bank), with the goal of either having farmers covering the cost of these advisory services themselves (i.e. fee-for-service; e.g. SME project) and/or indirectly through input supply firms (e.g. Sugd AgroServe) or micro-credit institutions (e.g. TAFF). For most current projects, the primary focus is on very progressive farmers who have both land and easy access to markets for both domestic and export crops. However, these projects are providing extension and advisory services to no more than a maximum of 10% of the farmers in Tajikistan. In order to expand advisory services, especially for the rural poor, will require a substantially expanded extension system. One advantage of including public extension workers, at the Rayon and Jamoat levels, in providing these services is that their salaries are government funded. Therefore, if the agronomists at the Jamoat level can be properly trained, then given needed capital resources (e.g. communication tools and transportation) and then getting them fully engaged with farmer groups in each village, then it is more likely that these public extension workers will continue providing advisory services to farmers after the project ends. Of course, this depends on the government’s willingness to pay for these continuing operational costs after the project ends, but this is a key issue to be negotiated with the MOA and local government.

Rural Extension, Information and Advisory Service Needs

If the objective of the Feed-the-Future strategy is to help the 44,000 small-scale, poor farmers to increase their farm household income and family nutrition, then the pluralistic extension system in the Khatlon Oblast needs to be rapidly scaled up. First, there are relatively few NGOs in Khatlon Oblast that are currently providing agricultural advisory services to small-scale farmers. In addition, there are fewer input supply dealers and processors in this oblast (in comparison with in the Sugd Oblast). On the other hand, there are 3 or more agricultural specialists at the Rayon level (agronomists, animal husbandry specialists and agricultural economists) and currently or shortly there will be at least one agricultural officer (probably an agronomist) in each Jamoat. Therefore, it is extremely important and urgent to start building public-private-partnerships (PPPs) among the current service providers in the Khatlon Oblast.

Building Social Capital

Most of the project leaders that the team visited put a high priority on organizing self-help groups (SHGs) that soon evolve into producer groups, associations and/or federations for specific crop and/or livestock products. Most of these SHGs start small (e.g. 10-15 farmers), but then evolve into associations or federations at the village-level, that could then be scaled up to the Jamoat (sub-district) and, eventually, to the Rayon (district) level. The following are the number of SHGs or Producer groups that were reported by the different organizations that the team interviewed, including both the Khatlon and Sugd Oblast:

3 Building social capital essentially means organizing self-help groups which then become producer groups.
• Family Farmer Project (FFP) by DAI—after one year they have 13 groups of women farmers, but the number of farmers was not specified;
• ATAC Project in Kulyab city of Khatlon Oblast is working with 8 groups of 107 farmers working on tomatoes and cucumbers, as well as 67 farmers working on potatoes, 45 farmers working on honey, 45 farmers working on apples and pears, and 5 farmers (mostly women) working on poultry. Originally, they had planned to work with about 3,000 farmers in 8 Rayons of the Khatlon Oblast (in 2010 and 14,000 farmers in 2011). However, since farmers have to pay for their training and advisory services, they are currently only working with about 270 farmers in 3 districts.
• Mehrangez NGO in the center of the Khatlon Oblast reported having 36 SHGs involving 27 women’s groups (198 women) and 9 men’s groups (28 men) for a total of 276 farmers. In addition, they are working with 511 farmers in two districts growing lemons, but there was no report on the number of SHGs.
• Ghamkhori NGO, also in the center of the Khatlon Oblast, reported having 16 SHGs with 240 members growing lemons, 27 farmers growing tomatoes and cucumbers, 53 farmers growing potatoes, and 11 farmers growing watermelons. Also, for another project financed by ACT, they indicated that they had established 68 SHGs, but only 10 SHGs were selected to establish solar greenhouses (1 greenhouse/group).
• EHIO project being implemented by ICA in the Sugd Oblast indicated serving about 1,000 farmers, but no indication about the number of groups. Also, they are working with 75 women farmers on key horticulture crops using greenhouses.
• ASDP Nau project reported having about 50 farmer groups in the Sugd Oblast, including 1,475 farmers growing fruit (apricots), vegetables (tomatoes and cucumber) and livestock (sheep, goats and cows).
• Local Market Development (LMD) Project has been operating in the Sugd Oblast since 2008 and currently has about 45 farmer groups, including 667 farmers that are working on the production of tomatoes, cucumbers, raspberries, cabbage and onions for export.
• Sugd AgroServe has about 1,000 farmers who are members of this input supply firm, but they did not appear to be organized into SHGs or farmer’s groups.
• SME Project provides services directly to Dehkan Farms through field advisors; therefore, there are no SHGs or Producer Groups (PGs), since these Dehkan Farms sell directly to available cotton processing firms.
• PRO-APT project which started in January 2010 is currently serving about 1,000 farmers, largely through input supply dealers. However, there was no indication about how they are organizing these farmers into producer groups and then getting them linked to key markets. Also, at least half of these participating farmers are located in the Sugd Oblast.

It is clear from our interviews with the different NGOs and other advisory service providers that the vast majority of producer groups currently being organized and linked to markets are up north in the Sugd Oblast or in the districts around Dushanbe. The reason why the Sugd Oblast is moving far ahead of the Khatlon Oblast is due in large part to the civil war that began in 1992 and continued through 1997 with nearly 100,000 people being killed. In the process, this created many problems, some of which continue today. Therefore, it is especially important to get small-scale farmers, especially women, in the
Khatlon Oblast organized into SHGs and then into producer groups that are linked to markets, so they can begin increasing their household income and family nutrition, especially for their children.

**Market Information and Market Linkages**

As implied from the problems above, there are many more processing and export firms in the Sugd Oblast than in Khatlon Oblast and the reasons are obvious. Therefore, it will be important to get both local and export markets established in the major towns and cities of the Khatlon Oblast. Also, there are some processing firms being established in this province; therefore, getting farmers organized and producing important crops for both processing and export will be very important. As noted from the Mehrangez NGO working near Kurgan-Tube (the capital of Khatlon Oblast), many of the early season tomatoes and cucumbers being produced there are being transported to the Sugd Oblast for processing or being exported from Tajikistan directly to Russia.

The key to getting small-scale farmers knowledgeable about markets, where they can sell their products, is to strengthen their access to market information through the appropriate type of communication technology, starting with mass media (i.e. radio and television) and, eventually making available daily market information via SMS using their mobile phones. The current problem is that daily market information is not yet available and it will take some time to both establish a market information system, like Esoko, and then to routinely obtain this commodity specific information from many markets across Tajikistan and then to train farmers how to access and use this market information. It should be noted that given the number of processors and buyers for export markets in Sugd Oblast, it is likely that this market information system may first be established in the northern province. However, small-scale farmers in the Khatlon Oblast will also need this market information as soon as possible. As noted in the Executive Summary, both AIST and SAS are very interested in establishing an effective market information system in Tajikistan; therefore, starting with mass media (i.e. radio and TV) will be the first step in generating market information for farmers, especially SHGs that can start producing and selling larger quantities of high value crops and other products.

**Natural Resource Management Issues**

There are various issues surrounding natural resource management (NRM) that play a role in agriculture, including water management, soil erosion and land tenure issues. Tajikistan has an abundance of water, with over 8% of the country's surface is taken up by glaciers. This abundance of water is used for hydropower as well as for irrigation in Tajikistan. Despite this abundance, sustainable and efficient water use remains major challenges. Soil erosion is exacerbated by poorly designed irrigation systems and the lack of soil conservation measures such as contour farming. Also, under the Dehkan Farm arrangement, where farmers do not have yearly access to the same land, they have little concern about maintaining their land resources, such as fertility, since the next year they will be farming in a different section of their respective Dehkan Farm. Another continuing problem is that most small-scale farm households, especially women farmers, are not fully knowledgeable about how to maintain

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their farmland over the long-term. Therefore, training these farmers about how to maintain their farmland, using appropriate NRM procedures will be very important, as well as setting up water user associations (WUA) that can maintain their irrigation systems over the long-term.

Family Nutrition

The nutritional status of children in Tajikistan is a major cause for concern. For example, 17 percent of children under age 5 in Tajikistan are underweight (i.e. low weight for age); 7 percent of young Tajik children are wasted (low weight for height); and 27 percent of children under 5 are stunted (low height for age). Also, it was reported that a total of about 10,000 children are stunted, wasted and underweight and that the levels of acute child malnutrition have increased since 2003. Also, it was reported that children aged 12-23 months are 70 percent more likely to be underweight than a child aged 6-11 months. This coincides with the time when foods (i.e. bread made out of wheat), other than breast milk, are generally introduced into the diet for these children (source: Child Poverty in Tajikistan carried out by Angela Baschieri and Jane Falkingham, University of Southampton, for the UNICEF office in Dushanbe in 2007). Nutritional habits and preferences show a heavy preference for grains with over 60% of calories coming from that source, with only a small emphasis on fruits and vegetables. A contributor to poor rates of nutrition is poor hygiene.

Extension Support Services

Education and Training of District and Front-line Extension Workers

There is no training at the Tajik Agrarian University (TAU) about the needed “extension process” skills that the front-line extension and advisory workers must have to deliver effective advisory services to farmers. Specifically, TAU offers no courses on extension methods, including key process skills. In some donor funded projects there is limited in-service training about some of these skills (how to organize self-help groups (SHGs), but this area of expertise is a major gap in helping strengthen the pluralistic extension system in Tajikistan and making it more “farmer-led” and “market-driven.” Also, the National Agricultural Training Center (NATC) reported that 10 years ago it offered a course on extension methods, but nothing has been done since then in terms of teaching process skills to field extension workers. Therefore, both pre-service and in-service training in these needed process skills is urgently needed by extension personnel at the different levels, including:

- Participatory extension methods (for district and sub-district extension workers);
- Conducting Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) to enhance program planning (especially for district and sub-district extension workers);
- Adult learning, including extension training methods and audio visual techniques (front-line extension workers);
- Organizing SHGs, which emerge into producer or farmer groups, associations and federations, including the dynamics of creating and working with these groups (front-line extension workers);
- Agricultural information and communication technology (ICT) skills and knowledge (Jamoat, district and national extension workers that are providing or using these services);

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• Extension management (especially for district extension managers)
• Addressing gender (women farmers) and youth issues, re: increasing farm household incomes and improving nutrition for the children in each household (district and sub-district extension workers);

In short, there is an urgent need for short-term, in-service training, especially in these process skills, possibly being handled through the National Agricultural Training Center (NATC) and/or one of the other training centers. Also, these same pre-service training courses should be introduced into the academic curriculum at Tajik Agrarian University. The MEAS project is developing these needed training modules and they could be pilot tested in Tajikistan in 2012.

In addition to these process skills, additional training will be needed, especially for the district and Jamoat level extension workers, in terms of learning how to use the new ICT technologies (e.g. Android Tablets or an IPad 2), so they can quickly access both technical and market information via the Internet, as well as capturing and sharing specific information needed by the individual or groups of farmers being served. Also, these frontline extension workers will need to learn how to become generalists, who can handle all types of crop and livestock problems and solutions, rather than just being specialists in one technical field, like cotton production. In some cases they will communicate directly with district agricultural specialists (e.g. crops, livestock or economics) or in some cases with researchers at the national level for very specific problems that can’t be solved at the district or oblast level. In short, during year one, specific types of training courses will have to be carried out for both district agricultural specialists and field extension workers at the Jamoat level.

**Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)**

Assuming that it would be possible to start pursuing a public-private-partnership to reach upwards of 44,000 small-scale farmers, especially women farmers, under this FtF initiative, it will be critical to carefully monitor and evaluate the work of both the local NGOs and public extension workers. It is suggested that the role of the NGO will primarily be to start organizing self-help and farmer groups at the village level in the selected pilot districts and then getting them connected with the agronomists or extension workers being hired at the Jamoat level. The goal will be to ensure that both of these field workers are pursuing this proposed new approach, which is to be more decentralized, farmer-driven and market-oriented.

Therefore, the first step will be to identify the different markets in each Jamoat and district where farmers in different villages can sell their crop and/or livestock products. In short, if farmers in different villages don’t have easy and/or year-long road access, then this will affect the specific crop or livestock systems they can successfully produce and market. Also, the type and quality of their available land (e.g. irrigated or rainfed, plus soil type and fertility), especially on their backyard gardens and presidential land, will also affect what they can successfully produce and sell. In short, what crop or livestock products can be successfully produced and marketed will depend on many variables, which must be taken into consideration in planning the specific crop and livestock systems to be promoted in many/most villages and Jamoats in each district.

The second step will be in getting selected farmers, primarily poor women farmers, organized into SHGs. First, this NGO facilitator should hold a meeting in each village indicating the goal of this
proposed FtF project and their desire to get one or more groups organized in each village (this takes about 6-9 months). During this process, the front-line agronomist should be involved and start discussing what types of crop or livestock products these farmers might consider to both increase their farm income as well as to improve family nutrition. The purpose would be to get this front-line agronomist up-to-speed in terms of what farmers in each village are thinking about, so he/she could learn more about these different options and their potential feasibility, both in terms of land/soil quality and market availability. Also, this would enable him to start gaining more information and knowledge about production practices related to diversifying their farming systems, needed inputs and their costs, as well as possible market opportunities within their Jamoat and Rayon. Once this agronomist has this needed information, then these options could be discussed with the NGO facilitator and the emerging SHG leaders within each village. At that point, they would be ready to move forward with a demonstration plot to determine the feasibility of these different options.

The third step would be to inform and demonstrate to the interested farmers in each village about these proposed crop and/or livestock options in planning for the next phase of the project. For example, what additional resources would be needed? For example, if they were to pursue the early production of tomatoes and cucumbers, how would they secure and set-up greenhouses in their backyard gardens? If they were to start growing hens to generate eggs for their children, where would they get the chicks and how would they set up a small henhouse? If they were to start producing any of these high-value crops, where and how would they collectively get seed, fertilizer and pesticides and how would they get these products to markets?

In short, each one of these field level activities would need to be closely monitored and evaluated to ensure that these new agricultural advisory services are being carried out correctly. In addition, feedback from the farmers in each village and Jamoat would need to be taken into consideration, both for the NGO facilitator and the local agronomist, both of whom should now be engaged in providing effective farmer and market driven extension activities. It is expected that these M&E activities would routinely be carried out by the regional extension specialists who should be fully engaged in rapidly scaling up these organizational and advisory services through the FFP. In terms of M&E outputs, there should be regular assessments of the performance of both service providers during year one, as well as feedback from the leaders of the SHGs being organized in the different villages.
MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Scaling-Up the FTF Initiative by Building Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

As mentioned previously, there are about 25 donor-funded organizations providing agricultural extension and advisory services, with the majority of them being in the Sugd Oblast (province) in northern Tajikistan, as well as in the districts around Dushanbe, the nation’s capital. Nearly all of these advisory service providers are funded through different donor projects, but many use different methodologies and approaches of providing specific advisory services. For example, some focus on specific crops (e.g. cotton) or livestock systems, as well as using different approaches of recovering the cost of these advisory services (e.g. through input supply stores, micro-credit or direct farm payments). Since they are working on donor funded projects, these organizations have a good understanding about project management, working towards specific goals, organizing their work, as well as managing and accounting for the funds received. The donor funded local NGOs that were visited showed that they also know about how to organize and work with these farmer and self-help groups (SHGs).

However, one key finding from the SHGs visited and interviewed, is that the capacity of these NGOs to scale up these SHGs is very limited, especially in getting them linked to markets for specific high-value crops. If the goal is to reach 44,000 farm households, then FTF will be faced with a major challenge that has not been met by the other donor-funded projects. Specifically, how can FTF scale up and reach a much larger number of small-scale FPs across the Khatlon Oblast, in contrast with what is currently being accomplished by these successful NGOs. This could be achieved if USAID could bring together the strengths of these different implementing partners, especially local NGOs, in developing new public-private-partnerships (PPP). In this case, the NGOs could help organize these SHGs and then get them connected with these new Jamoat agronomists and, thereby, enable the organization of much larger numbers of small-scale farmers within each village to produce and collectively market different high-value crop and livestock products across the different districts in Khatlon Oblast.

The USAID funded FFP could begin by identifying and working closely with the successful NGOs in Khatlon Oblast to move forward with this successful methodology of organizing and working with a much larger number of SHGs. This methodology would need to take into account the strong participation of women farmers, with a focus on backyard gardens, including high value crops and livestock (e.g. backyard poultry, small ruminants, etc.), and the other land where they would have continuing access and control (e.g. available presidential land). Also, FFP should try to identify the other successful NGOs within Khatlon Oblast that are successfully building social capital (e.g. self-help groups) in key priority districts. For example, if an agreement can be reached\(^7\), then it might be possible for public extension agents at the Jamoat level to start working with these NGO facilitators to both organize and provide technical and market information for these small-scale farmers as they learn what and how to produce specific high-value crops/products (depending on agro-ecological conditions) for available markets (depending on roads and distance to these markets).

\(^7\) Identifying and agreeing with government officials about the proposed role of agricultural specialists at the district level, as well as the new agronomists at the Jamoat level, and the willingness of these Jamoat agronomists to start working closely together with the local NGOs in building public-private-partnerships.
If the forthcoming FTF project expects to impact about 44,000 FHs by the end of this new project (i.e. to increase FH income by $250/year), then it would be necessary to start organizing and serving a much larger number of FHS each year if this project is to be successful. The role of the FFP could be to first identify and start contracting with these “successful” NGOs to begin organizing new SHGs. It appears that most of the current NGOs in Khatlon Oblast do not have sufficient staff to enable them to reach such a large number of FHS that the forthcoming FTF project seeks to reach through this new initiative. Therefore, to scale-up these current NGOs, they will have to hire and train many new staff who can act as facilitators in organizing and working with these new SHGs.

One proposed scenario would be for each NGO facilitator to start by organizing and serving at least one SHG/village in each Jamoat. It is expected that they would visit and work with these new SHGs on a weekly basis during year one, as they help these SHGs determine how they can intensify their backyard gardens and other available land to increase their FH income. In addition, it would be necessary, once agreements have been met, to work with these local agronomists in carrying out demonstration plots on one backyard garden/village to demonstrate what could be done to increase household income and improve family nutrition. Then, during the second and third year of this project, if these first SHGs were successful, then the goal would be to scale-up additional SHGs within each village. During this first year, the goal would be to start building public-private partnerships, whereby public extension agents (trained agronomists) at the Jamoat level would be expected to start providing these new SHGs with both technical and market information, so they could begin learning how to intensify and diversify their backyard gardens and other land, based on their access to needed inputs and available markets, where they could successfully sell their products.

Since most NGOs would not have many experienced agronomists, these facilitators would primarily be expected to organize, consult with and strengthen their SHGs as they consider how to intensify and strengthen their backyard gardens. On the technical side, it is expected that Jamoat level agronomists would work with these SHGs in terms of how to scale-up and better manage their gardens, ranging from items such as variety selection, fertilizer application and pest management, as well as learning how to identify and then link these SHGs to available markets. The role of the FFP staff would be to coordinate these NGOs facilitators and public sector agronomists, so they could start working closely together in scaling-up and reaching an increasing number SHGs within each village by providing them with both process and technical skills and knowledge.

**Proposed Pilot Project: Engage and Transform Extension Workers at the Jamoat & District Levels**

The presence of government funded agronomists’ at the Rayon (district) and Jamoat (sub-district) level offers both challenges and opportunities. The Government of Tajikistan is caught between its past role of issuing directives on what crops to produce and are slowly beginning to shift towards a more market-driven agricultural sector. At the present the local government in Tajikistan (i.e. Jamoats at the sub-district level) is in the process of hiring agronomists who could serve as extension advisors within their respective Jamoats. If the traditional modus operandi is followed regarding the “supervision” of the Dehkan Farms, then little progress will be made in increasing farm household income, especially for small-scale women farmers.
One key issue, which needs to be addressed in making this pilot project a more viable option, is to encourage better coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and Local Government. At the present time, agricultural specialists (SMSs) at the district level are affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture; however extension workers now being hired at the Jamoat level are affiliated with the Civil Administration. Currently, there are some tensions between these two agencies regarding the role that the Jamoat will play in hiring agronomists to provide advisory services at the local level. However, if USAID and FFP are able to facilitate and encourage these two agencies to work more closely together, then this proposed pilot project could have significant impact both in terms of scaling-up and ensuring the long-term sustainability of advisory services, especially at the Jamoat and village level. As described in this section, if key resources could be made available to enhance extension activities at both the district and Jamoat levels, then this could be a major incentive to bring these two agencies together. However, it is also recognized that some additional steps may be needed to bridge the current tensions between these two agencies.

First, these new Jamoat agronomists will need to be trained so they can provide good advisory services to the small-scale farmers being served, especially on their backyard gardens and other available land. Therefore, these new agronomists could offer real opportunities to expand the scale of extension activities that the FTF strategy seeks to address, as well as achieving long-term “sustainability” beyond these shorter 4-5 year projects. For example, it is recommended that the FFP work with both the agricultural office at the Rayon (district) level and Jamoat agronomists on a pilot basis in several districts. Since there are 24 districts in Khatlon Oblast, it is suggested that at least 5 key districts be selected as a “pilot project” to reach as many farmers as possible through this project. In order to do so, however, it will be necessary to provide minimum training and other resources for these agronomists, especially at the Jamoat level. Most important, however, will be to create an agreed upon, well-structured framework for these Jamoats and district extension workers to collaborate together. In particular, the field staff will need to carry out specific extension activities, including getting farmer groups organized, and then determining which high-value crop and livestock products can be successfully produced and marketed.

Second, the process for providing extension and advisory services is not only technical, but includes group process skills, as well as governance. Working successfully with these newly hired or current agronomists at the Jamoat level requires a major paradigm shift in terms of how they provide needed advisory services to farmers. Included in this paradigm shift are the small-scale farmers, especially the backyard gardeners, who need to learn how they can intensify and diversify their farming systems. Also, this should be a farmer-led process, which involves the creation of self-help and producer groups in the different villages, which then start setting extension priorities for these field extension staff and progressively start evaluating the quality of services being provided by these extension workers. This paradigm shift will help transform the efforts of these agronomists to start becoming effective extension service providers who are subject to farmer approval based on their performance (i.e. bottom-up vs. top-down).

Third, to create more effective extension workers, it will be necessary to train them in both technical and process skills, especially in working with small-scale farmers and backyard gardeners. The training they receive should contain both up-to-date technical information about appropriate crop and livestock
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systems in this district, as well as process skills about organizing self-help groups (SHGs) and then transforming these SHGs into producing and marketing specific crop or livestock systems. Therefore, what will make extension workers more effective is their ability to learn and gain access to needed technical and market information. In this regard, training will include elements on how and where to access technical and market information, as well as where to find answers for key questions and issues raised by these farmers (e.g. calling district-level SMS, researchers working on specific problems, etc.).

Some of these skills and knowledge will require that these field extension workers can conduct online assessments of this needed information, as well as communicating with other extension workers within their district or beyond. Part of this training process will involve follow up and coaching as a group during the proposed district-level meetings. Therefore, creating a cohort of extension workers within each district that can help create a support network that will reinforce these extension workers in the work they are carrying out. For example, it is suggested that every two weeks, these Jamoat extension agents would meet for a day at the district agriculture office. During this day, an expert or trainer with extensive technical as well as process experience from FFP or some other organization could work with this group to review their progress, as well as in addressing specific issues or challenges they are currently facing. In addition, these groups could recommend specific technical or process issues that could be addressed during these biweekly meetings.

Forth, another important issue to be addressed is the need to provide sufficient resources for both the Jamoat and district extension workers, so they can begin to effectively carry out their respectively assigned duties. Specifically, these Jamoat agronomists will need to reach most farmers in the 6-7 villages within each Jamoat. Therefore, in order for them to reach these villages and communities, extension workers will need to be provided with some type of transportation resources that can be used to cover the cost of reaching the villages they serve, probably on a weekly basis. This could involve reimbursing them for the fuel they purchase for using their own car or renting a vehicle to reach those villages that cannot be reached via public transportation. The same can be said for the district agriculture offices, but here more limited transportation resources may be needed, especially if they have good Internet access, and have a good way to communicate directly with these Jamoat extension workers. There is no doubt that the district agricultural director will want at least one vehicle, but ICT connectivity will be the most efficient way of connecting these subject matter specialists (SMSs) at the district level with the front-line extension workers at the Jamoat level.

Fifth, gaining quick access to needed technical and market information for farmers in each Jamoat is a challenging problem, unless specific resources are provided. Currently in Tajikistan, there are a variety of internet providers that are providing Wi-max services through flash drives. To do so, one of the new Android “Tablets” (with needed elements⁸) should be purchased for each of these front-line extension workers, so they could gain immediate access to the technical information needed by their different farmers. In addition, for about $25 - $30/gigabyte/month this needed technical and market information could be easily downloaded. Also, these tablets could be used as a teaching and learning tool as farmers

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⁸ Wi-Fi connectivity (cellular access) including a flash drive, USB port, SIM card, at least 8 GBs of storage, GIS enabled, including a camera to take photos or videos of innovative farmers to share with other farmers or to send specific disease or insect problems to an SMS or researcher who could address these immediate problems.
request specific information about particular production and/or marketing problems. In the process, these extension workers could document their visits to these different farmer groups, as well as to share success stories with other producer groups, as well as the other extension agents within their district. In addition, they could record videos (e.g. a presentation capturing how an innovative farmer is producing and/or marketing a specific product) and/or other relevant and needed information that could be viewed by other groups of farmers with whom they work. These tools would create a much more interactive and effective extension worker, who is then able to share his/her knowledge, resources and other information with the farmers being served.

As noted above, the most efficient way for district SMS to backstop and support the field extension workers would be through the purchase and use of Tablets for email communications about specific issues, as well as having one or two computers in the district office whereby they could download and store larger amounts of technical information, as well as training modules and other information on their computers. Also, they could use these computers, with projection units, to both train and share important information on a bi-weekly basis with these front-line extension workers, so that their knowledge base and focus on serving small-scale farmers continues to increase over time.

Information and Communication Technology

Among the ongoing initiatives in Tajikistan, two institutions have focused part of their work on creating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that can provide useful technical advisory information and, at some point, current market information. In the Sugd Province in northern Tajikistan, Sugd AgroServe (SAS) Consulting has designed a new web site www.agroinform.tj that contains relevant information about agriculture. In addition, they are working to develop a format, when updated, could provide current market prices, especially in northern Tajikistan (on a fee only basis). In the south, the JICA funded AIST initiative in the MOA has designed a web site http://www.aist.tj/ with similar, but more expanded functions. Both sites are interesting in that they provide relevant technical information and would like to make available daily market information.

In addition, SAS also publishes newsletters for their 1,000+ members and also offers this information service via text messages regarding different crops, from planting to harvest. For a nominal fee, farmers also have access to other comprehensive information as to when to plant, what varieties and inputs are currently available, how to handle specific pest and disease outbreaks, as well as current market prices for some crops. At present, SAS has 98 subscribers who pay 30 Somonis ($6.25) for information on specific crops.

While the above examples offer an interesting overview into the potential use of the Internet and mobile phone technologies, further information and an assessment will be needed. First, who is currently accessing this information and, more importantly, what sorts of tools do small-scale men and women farmers need to access this information, either directly through their mobile phones or through mass media. While there are many interesting examples of ICT approaches being used in African countries (e.g. Esoko in Ghana and 14 other SSA countries) and South Asian countries (both public and private sources of market information available), an important issue is how to set up, then collect this market information on a daily basis, and then who should have access to this market information, especially if USAID wants to increase the income of these small-scale women farmers.
Therefore, deciding how to make this much needed market information available in Tajikistan should be assessed through a user survey to determine which types of farmers can access both technical and market information, and how such a system could be financed. In short, if this was largely public information, would progressive farmers be willing to pay some of these costs? The key issue is to ensure that any system being created through an up-front investment should be sustainable on a continuing basis, taking into consideration user trends and dynamics. Both MEAS and USAID have worked to strengthen ICT in different countries and they could provide additional support in assessing which ICT approaches would most likely to be sustainable on a continuing basis, using current usage patterns.

For example, based on information gathered during this assessment, most small-farm households have access to either a radio or television. Therefore, mass media, including radio and television, could serve as an important starting point for sharing agriculture innovations, new technologies, and market information, especially for small-scale farm households. In addition, efforts could be made to document and share this information via the SHGs and producer groups being organized by the FFP using important messages that could be prepared and presented through both radio and television. For example, short clips about how innovative farmers are implementing new crop and/or livestock systems, or processing and storing food on their own farm for consumption by their children. These new technologies, innovative approaches and market opportunities should be shared with these small-scale farmers, especially those farmers getting organized into SHG and producer groups. This could be a means of sharing successful experiences ranging from producing new high-value crop and livestock products to ways of improving household nutrition.

In short, to reach small-scale farmers, especially women, it will be important to generate and share new production and marketing information. One option would be for FFP to create and outsource the production of these different audio-visual training materials. Another idea would be to document the process being undertaken by FFP and then share it with the broader community through national television or radio to document different innovations being used to improve backyard gardens and other available land. The idea would be to document and publicize how backyard gardens can help increase incomes as well as to improve family nutrition. This would help bring to light the importance of family nutrition, women’s empowerment and decision making, as well as the viability and importance of backyard gardens.

Another idea would be to promote the creation of new participatory videos, which could be made by the Jamoat agronomists and/or NGO facilitators using their new Android “Tablets” or an Ipad2 communication device. If the video cameras or tablets were made available, then videos could be recorded and then reviewed, modified and added to a new USAID funded effort in Tajikistan, similar to digital green http://digitalgreen.org/ or other initiatives that focus on participatory video making, such as http://insightshare.org/. These different initiatives are offering interesting, but different options of working with farmers to document and share their own experiences and perspectives. Another innovative tool for engaging farmers would be to set up a weekly radio program that addresses key issues within the agricultural sector. The host could engage farmers from different districts by having them call in by phone or through texting issues that outline the problems they are currently facing and how other farmers are solving these problems.
ANNEX A  ORGANIZATIONS AND KEY PEOPLE CONSULTED WITH DURING THIS RAPID SCOPING MISSION

The following section provides more detailed information on these individuals, their organizations and needed contact information:

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Strengthening the Pluralistic Extension and Advisory System in Tajikistan

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ANNEX B  TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCOPE OF WORK FOR THIS SCOPING MISSION OF TAJIKISTAN’S PLURALISTIC EXTENSION SYSTEM

The primary objective of the mission will be to develop an institutional/programmatic overview of the pluralistic extension system in Tajikistan and to assess the organizational structure, relationships, major activities and services, as well as the primary constraints of the key extension service providers within Tajikistan public organizations (POs), including National Association of Dehkan Farms (NADF), Agricultural Information Service of Tajikistan (AIST), the Agricultural Information Network (AIN), Zarzamin, EHIO-Farhang va Tarakkiyot, the Agricultural Training and Advisory Center (ATAC), as well as private sector firms, such as Sughd Agroserv Consulting, and the Agribusiness Association of Tajikistan or (AAT). The proposed dates for this scoping mission will be from October 1, 2011 (arrival in Dushanbe) to about October 20, 2011 (departure from Dushanbe). In addition, the team will participate in the Central Asian Symposium on Extension and Advisory Services from October 4-6, 2011.

Specifically, the mission will:

- Meet with the directors or leaders of all these major agricultural extension and advisory service organizations to assess the current capacity as well as the expertise of their field staff (e.g. number, gender, educational qualifications and areas of expertise including subject matter specialists and front-line extension staff) to carry out extension/advisory service activities. In addition, the mission will determine what these directors/leaders perceive as their primary achievements to date, as well as their human and financial resource constraints, which may be limiting their institutional capacity to provide improved advisory services to small-scale farm households.
  - For example, are the field staff receiving training each year on new or recommended production practices, new market opportunities, how to organize producer groups and to link farmers to markets, as so forth.
  - Does each organization have sufficient financial and other resources (extension/ training materials, etc.) to allow their staff to deliver needed services to the different groups of farmers that need to be served (e.g. landless, small and medium size farmers, including both men and women farmers)

- To determine the primary focus of each extension service provider. For example, are they primarily focusing on increasing the productivity of staple food crops and/or are they also helping men and/or women farmers learn to diversify/intensify their farming systems so they can help them increase their farm income, improve household nutrition, as well as to increasing the productivity of staple food crops, high-value crops and livestock production.

- In addition, this assessment will look at other activities (e.g. who is organizing the producer groups for high-value crop, livestock, fisheries, etc. and linking these groups to markets) and enhancing the ICT capacity of getting both technical and marketing information to farmers. Also nutrition is likely a problem among the rural poor in Tajikistan, so each service provider will be assessed about information being shared with rural households about human nutrition.
To what extent do the several extension service providers share materials for farmer training and for providing technical assistance? Are there now, or have there been, efforts to jointly generate needed extension materials?

In summary, this study will focus on 1) identifying the major gaps within the different extension/advisory service providers, including institutional capacity, human competency and policy limitations and 2) to suggest some near- and long-term measures that may be needed to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of these different extension service providers. A draft scoping report will be shared with the USAID Mission by November 8th, which could be shared with DAI and the Family Farming Project (FFP), as well as the other service providers in Tajikistan, such as Agrodonish, the Agricultural Information Service of Tajikistan (AIST) and other appropriate institutions. Then, the final draft will be completed and submitted to the USAID Mission by November 30, 2011.
ANNEX C: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- **Survey of Existing Agricultural Extension Providers and Related Programs In Tajikistan**, including annexes A through R prepared in 2011 under the USAID Family Farming Program (FFP), Tajikistan, implemented by DAI
- **System of Agricultural Extension**, 2010 presentation by Narzullo Dadabaev, MOA, Republic of Tajikistan
- **Agricultural Extension in Tajikistan**, 2010 report by Agrodonish
- **Agricultural Extension in Tajikistan**, 2010 presentation by Willem van Weperen, SENAS
- **Profile of Agricultural Information Service of Tajikistan (AIST) document**, 2011
- **Advisory Product Development in Agricultural Extension**, SENAS presentation in 2010 by Willem van Weperen
- **Crop and Food Security Assessment Report**, 2011, prepared by FAO, Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the World Food Program (WFP)
- **Informational & Advisory Center Report**, 2011, prepared by AIST, Ministry of Agriculture
- **Draft Concept of Informational Consulting Center Project**, prepared by Hartwig Ungethuem
- **How Many Farms are there in Tajikistan?** 2007 paper prepared by Murat Aminjanov
- **Fruit & Vegetable Value Chain Promotion: GTZ Experience in Sugd**, 2010 presentation by the GTZ
- **International Comparative advantages of Tajikistan in the Agrofood sector**, 2011 presentation of the TAFF study
- **Summary Report on the E-Consultation in Central Asia and the Caucasus**,
- **Recent evolution of Tajik agribusiness and Challenges Ahead**, 2010, Christophe Cordonnier, TAFF
- **Feed the Future: Tajikistan Strategy**, 2011 USAID Strategic Review Outline Document
- **Analysis of the System of Administration of Agriculture at the local level in the Republic of Tajikistan and Recommendations for its Improvement**, 2010 report prepared by Don Van Atta, Bahadur Haidarov and Ibrohim Shukurov for the UNDP.
- **Organizational Structure of the National Agricultural Training Center and the Main Areas of Activities**, 2010 report by the NATC Director
Annex D: Additional Information on Service Providers

**Ghamkhori NGO—Bahodur Toshmatov, Chairman**

As described in this assessment, this NGO is engaged in many different donor funded projects, ranging from agriculture, health, nutrition, education and legal activities. The following is a summary of the other agricultural projects that they are implementing. First, their poverty reduction project, which is financed by ACT, is focused on 4 districts further south. During the first year, they helped very poor people start working on 5 ha of abandoned land (total) in several districts. The goal was to help these poor farmers adjust to climate change. As a result, they helped establish 68 SHGs in different villages and then 10 of these SHGs were selected to establish 10 solar greenhouses (1/group) across the 4 districts. In this project, the members of these SHGs agreed to allocate their land to establish these solar greenhouses. Sixty percent of the cost of establishing these solar greenhouses (i.e. the physical infrastructure) was covered by the project and 40% of the cost was covered by the members of the SHG (i.e. in-kind cost of their labor to set up these solar greenhouses).

Another project was helping small ruminant (sheep and goats) farmers in one district process their wool through the purchase of 10 spinners, so they could process and market their wool products. Also, they were working with cotton farmers to gain access to new cotton varieties (i.e. seed from Australia). The agronomist working on this project worked with farmers on 300 hectares of cotton land, with the goal of scaling up this project to 1,500 hectares (e.g. 1-5 ha/farmer), but he said that they are currently working with about 30 farmers who have 10 ha each. He indicated that initially, 50 Somonis were being charged to provide advisory services for each hectare of land, with GIZ covering 24 Somonis/ha and then the farmers paid the other 26 Somonis (i.e. GIZ pays 49% and the farmers pay 51%). As a result, the agronomists are being paid about 15,000 Somonis ($3,150/year) for providing advisory services to these participating farmers. However, now that these farmers are organized into cooperatives and are largely satisfied with these advisory services (which has increased their production of cotton), they are now being charged 70% of the cost of these advisory services for the next growing season. However, he also indicated that they would prefer to have free advisory services.

**Input Supply Dealer in Khujand**

While visiting the PRO-APT project office in Khujand, the team met with a very progressive input supply dealer who has worked closely with ACDI-VOCA for the past two years. This input supply dealer has two stores where they sell imported seed, pesticides and fertilizer to progressive farmers in one or more districts. He has worked for 30 years as a trained agronomist, where he now has access to 22 ha of land for the production of cotton, as well as 14 ha for fruit trees (i.e. 1 ha of apple, 2 ha each of cherry, apricot, peaches and black plums) and 2 ha of wheat (followed by 0.5 ha of potatoes; 0.5 ha of watermelon and 1 ha of vegetables), 2 ha of onions, including 1.5 ha of onion seed production, 0.5 ha for garlic, and 1.5 ha of forage crops to feed his cows. He indicated that he has 5 cars, one for each son and himself, and a truck to carry inputs to his two input supply stores. In addition he has one large and one small tractor to carry out his farming practices.

As an input supply dealer, he buys most of the inputs for his input supply stores from Kazakhstan and then he indicated that about 11,500 farmers purchase some of these inputs from his store, including
cotton, onion, beets, fruit trees and wheat seed. Also, once he gets new seeds, he is uses his own land to reproduce and sell this seed through his two stores. In addition, he said that these stores, which were started in 2008, sold inputs worth about 900,000 Somoni during the first 18 months; however, during the past 18 months these sales have increased to about 2 million Somoni. From these sales, he gains about 10% profit from the sale of these inputs. In addition, he is assisting ACDI-VOCA in training 50 farmers in Southern Tajikistan about how to produce these needed seeds for distribution to other farmers.

He indicated that he is a member of the Agri-Business Association (there are 94 association members in Sugd Oblast) and the benefits of being a member is that they 1) share information about new technologies, improved varieties, etc.; and 2) learn how to obtain cheap, but good inputs, from nearby countries, including pesticides. Finally, he indicated that some of the major agricultural problems now being faced by Tajikistan include: 1) the recent closure of the border with Uzbekistan, especially for the export of key crops; 2) they are now unable to import seed, pesticides and fertilizer due to the closure of these borders; 3) 83% of the Sugd Oblast is still irrigated with old pumps, which is directly affecting farmer access to needed irrigation; and 4) most farmers lack the needed knowledge about how to increase their productivity, including the intensification of their farming systems.